

Gender Differences in Self-Confidence on a Feminine-Typed Task

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Abstract:

The present study answered Lirgg's (1991) call for confidence studies employing a feminine-typed task by assessing self-confidence and gender appropriateness in college cheerleading. Questionnaires assessing self-confidence and the gender appropriateness of cheerleading and its five subtasks (cheers and motions, partner stunts, jumps, tumbling, and cheerleading dance) were administered to college cheerleaders and to noncheerleader college undergraduates. It was hypothesized that females would possess more self-confidence in their ability at cheerleading and its various subtasks than would males, and that cheerleaders would rate their sport as less gender-stereotyped than would noncheerleaders. MANOVA results supported these hypotheses. On only two subtasks, partner stunts and tumbling, males possessed as much confidence as females did. Females reported more self-confidence on cheerleading and all other subtasks. Furthermore, cheerleaders of both sexes were aware of the stereotypes held by others, but viewed cheerleading and the tasks within it as more gender neutral than did noncheerleaders.

Key words: physical activity, cheerleading, gender appropriateness

Article:

Self-confidence is widely believed to be an important aspect of the psychological make-up of the individual athlete. A high level of self-confidence is one of the most consistently reported psychological characteristics of elite athletes, and research has shown that self-confidence often distinguishes highly successful athletes from the less successful ones (Gould, Weiss, & Weinberg, 1981; Highlen & Bennett, 1979; Mahoney & Avenier, 1977; Weiss, Wiese, & Klint, 1988).

Although studies have found that self-confidence is important in many different sports and across various age groups, considerable literature also suggests that women report lower levels of self-confidence in sports, as well as other achievement situations, than men. However, some authors suggest that women do not possess less self-confidence in all achievement situations than men, but that gender differences vary with certain situational variables. The present study investigates one of these situational variables, the gender appropriateness of the task. We hypothesize that when gender-appropriate tasks are considered, females do not report lower levels of self-confidence than males do, and may even report higher levels.

Gill (1992) reviewed the sport psychology literature on gender and noted that females typically report lower levels of expectations for success than males do and that this difference may explain gender differences in achievement situations. Sport psychology research indicates that women score lower than men in self-confidence for motor performance (Corbin, 1981; Corbin, Landers, Feltz, & Senior, 1983; Corbin & Nix, 1979; Duquin, 1986; Petruzzello & Corbin, 1988; Ryan & Pryor, 1976), but research goes beyond gender differences to consider other factors. Specifically, when gender appropriateness of the task has been considered, women have displayed lower confidence on tasks viewed as masculine (Corbin & Nix, 1979; Lirgg, 1991; Sanguinetti, Lee, & Nelson, 1985). Investigations of self-confidence on feminine-typed sports are noticeably absent in this research.

In an attempt to clear up some of the ambiguous findings surrounding this topic, Lirgg (1991) conducted a meta-analysis of the research on gender differences in self-confidence in physical activity. She included 35

studies that met four criteria: (a) were published after 1977, (b) employed both male and female subjects. (c) assessed confidence prior to any manipulation, and (d) presented statistics sufficient to calculate effect sizes.

Coding categories included sex-type of the task, confidence measure employed, and competitive nature of the situation. Lirgg found an overall effect size for the gender difference in confidence of .40, which favored males. Lirgg cautioned that although males were more confident, on average these results were extremely variable, and she could draw no conclusion based on this analysis alone. She did, however, find support for Lenney's (1977) contention that females show less confidence on masculine-typed tasks than males do. Lirgg (1991) discarded the only study employing a feminine task because it produced an outlying effect size ($ES = -1.02$). With this exclusion, the data fit a model suggesting that the more masculine a task, the greater the gender difference in self-confidence. However, Lirgg cautions that with more studies examining feminine-typed tasks, the one study might not be an outlier, and the results might be different.

Lirgg's (1991) meta-analysis does much to identify shortcomings of research on this topic. Specifically, she points out that only one study employed a feminine task (ballet), and this study varied so tremendously from the others that it was treated as an outlier. Clearly, more studies employing feminine tasks are needed so that findings from these studies will not be treated as exceptions. As the number of female participants in sport and physical activities continues to rise, researchers should investigate the experiences of these athletes more fully rather than dismiss their data. Furthermore, only one study from the meta-analysis asked subjects to sex-type the task before they actually performed it. Lirgg suggests that researchers should ask subjects to sex-type the task rather than relying on sex-typing from other studies or different subjects. Finally, Lirgg (1991) concludes that although the overall effect size ($ES = 0.40$) was not very large, females are not yet equal to males in their stated confidence beliefs.

Although many researchers have suggested that females have higher self-confidence on tasks seen as appropriate for their gender, researchers still have amazingly little empirical evidence. Researchers have also mentioned the influence of social factors such as stereotypes in affecting self-confidence, yet few have actually assessed how peers view a particular task to determine if, in fact, stereotypes do exist. Furthermore, studies rarely ask subjects to sex-type the task to determine if the sex-typing used by previous studies is valid.

To overcome these shortcomings, the present study investigated college cheerleading, a sport selected for its unique socialization properties. First, cheerleading is one of the few, if not the only, physical activities that females are socialized into at an earlier age than males are. Second, on coed college cheerleading squads, the participation rate among females and males is virtually equal. Finally, this activity has been rated as the most feminine sport from a list of different sports in several studies (Csizma, Wittig, & Schurr, 1988; Matteo, 1984; Metheny, 1965). Cheerleading was considered "wholly appropriate" for females by Metheny (1965), and Matteo (1984) and Csizma et al. (1988) found that cheerleading was the sport with the highest mean rating (rated most feminine). It would be difficult to find another sporting situation in which an activity is viewed as inappropriate for the male half of its participants.

Because cheerleading is stereotyped as feminine, we hypothesize that females will report higher confidence in their ability to perform the tasks within the sport than will males. We are also investigating the gender stereotypes surrounding college cheerleading to determine whether participants are aware of the stereotypes.

Based on the previous research in this area, the present study set out to test the following hypotheses:

1. Females will report greater confidence in cheerleading ability than will males and will display more confidence on the feminine-rated subtasks. Males will report higher levels of confidence on subtasks viewed as masculine and will report greater confidence on overall athletic ability than will females.
2. Cheerleaders will rate their sport as gender-neutral, whereas noncheerleaders will rate it as more feminine. Similar differences will be found for the subtasks in cheerleading.

3. When asked how a typical college student would rate cheerleading and the tasks involved in it, cheerleaders will predict that their peers view cheerleading and its subtasks as more feminine than the cheerleaders themselves do.

Method

Subjects

The total sample included 401 college cheerleaders (231 females, 170 males) and 117 noncheerleaders (81 females, 36 males). The cheerleaders ranged in age from 17 to 26 ($M = 20.1$). The noncheerleading sample ranged in age from 18 to 46 ($M = 21.9$). The cheerleaders were participating in a college cheerleading camp, and prior to the start of camp, they were asked to participate in the study. The noncheerleading sample members were enrolled in either an introductory health class or a beginning golf class and were sampled on a day agreed upon by instructor and researcher. For both samples, a cover letter informed the volunteers that filling out the questionnaire served as consent for participating in the study.

Measures

A two-part questionnaire was designed for this study. The first part assessed self-concept of ability at cheerleading, the tasks within cheerleading, and athletics in general. In the present study, self-confidence was defined in Eccles and Harold's (1991) terms as self-concept of ability. Because we were not predicting performance, having subjects relate a specific level of confidence based on how they expected to perform seemed inappropriate. The more global construct of self-concept of ability was much more suited to our purposes, and thus, subjects were asked how confident they were in their ability as a cheerleader.

In addition to an overall estimate, cheerleaders reported their confidence on five different tasks within cheerleading: partner stunts, cheerleading jumps, cheers/motions, tumbling, and cheerleading dance. These tasks are essential elements of cheerleading, yet some may be viewed as more masculine or feminine than others. Subjects were also asked to report how confident they were with their overall athletic ability, because subjects might report low confidence at cheerleading or its subtasks while still possessing a high degree of confidence in their athletic ability.

Another purpose of this study was to investigate the degree to which cheerleaders were aware of the stereotypes associated with their sport. Although cheerleading has been ranked as an extremely feminine sport, the large number of male cheerleaders in this country suggest that these stereotypes may not be held by those involved with the sport. Thus, cheerleaders and noncheerleaders were asked to rate the gender appropriateness of cheerleading and its five subtasks. Additionally, subjects were asked to indicate how they felt a typical college student would rate the same items to determine whether cheerleaders were aware of the stereotypes held by their peers. Both samples received the same questionnaire.

Self-Concept of Ability. Subjects responded to the items, "How confident are you in your ability ... " as a cheerleader and at the five different subtasks within cheerleading, on 7-point Likert scales, with 1 = *not at all confident*, 4 = *moderately confident*, and 7 = *extremely confident*. The wording was adapted from Eccles and Harold (1991) and was suggested initially by Eccles et al. (1983). Also included was the question, "How confident are you in your overall athletic ability?"

Gender-Appropriateness Ratings. Subjects were asked "How would you rate ... " the sport of cheerleading and the tasks within it, with 1 = *extremely feminine task*, 4 = *equal for both sexes*, and 7 = *extremely masculine task*. This wording was used by Csizma et al. (1988) and is typical of research in gender typing. Subjects were also asked to predict how the typical college student would rate each of the items using the same scales.

Procedure

Subjects were asked to participate in a study on cheerleading, and questionnaires were administered to those who volunteered. Of the 540 questionnaires that were given out at the cheerleading camp, 495 were returned, resulting in a response rate of 91.6%. Of those 495 returned, 401 were complete and included in the analysis,

and 94 were partially or not at all completed. The noncheerleading sample received the same questionnaire and was told to respond to each question as it pertained to them. A brief explanation of the study was given by the researcher and participation was voluntary. Of the 120 questionnaires given out in these classes, 117 were returned, resulting in a response rate of 97.5%. All of those returned by the students were completely filled out and were included in data analysis.

Results

Results for the main analyses, three Gender x Sample (2 x 2) MANOVAs, are presented following descriptive information. The first MANOVA included seven confidence ratings (overall cheerleading, five subtasks, overall athletic ability) as dependent variables; the second included the six gender-appropriateness ratings (cheerleading and its five subtasks); and the third included the six typical college student ratings of gender appropriateness. For all main analyses, overall multivariate results and effect sizes are presented and significant multivariate effects are followed with univariate effects, eta-square values, and standardized discriminant function coefficients to describe the nature of the multivariate differences. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for each sample.

Both samples contained more females than males, and the noncheerleading sample was slightly older. Although all cheerleaders were under age 26, 5 of the noncheerleaders were over age 30. None of the male noncheerleaders had any experience with the sport, but 29 of the female noncheerleaders had cheered in high school or previously, and 1 had college experience.

Confidence Ratings

The Gender x Sample (2 x 2) MANOVA on the confidence ratings produced a significant gender main effect, Wilks's lambda = .657, $F(7, 502) = 37.39$, $p < .001$.

Table 1 Descriptive Information

Variable	Cheerleaders		Noncheerleaders	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
Total <i>n</i>	231	170	81	36
Mean age	19.7	20.6	21.9	21.8
Age range	17–25	18–26	19–46	18–41
Cheering experience (years)				
College	1.94	1.77	.01	.00
High school	3.13	.33	.43	.00
Previous	2.31	.01	.68	.00
Age began cheerleading	12.0	18.9	11.7	N/A

Table 2 Gender x Sample Interaction for Confidence Ratings

Task	Univariate <i>F</i>	Eta-square	Standardized disc. coeff.
Cheerleading	5.29*	.010	.081
Cheers & motions	3.31	.006	.449
Partner stunts	9.26**	.018	.678
Jumps	1.49	.003	.238
Tumbling	2.32	.005	-.523
Dance	2.16	.004	-.586
Athletic ability	0.92	.002	-.335

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

.001, $ES = .343$; a main effect for sample, Wilks's lambda = .497, $F(7, 502) = 72.68$, $p < .001$, $ES = .503$; and a Gender x Sample interaction, Wilks's lambda = .947, $F(7, 502) = 4.02$, $p < .001$, $ES = .053$. Although the multivariate F values and effect sizes indicate that the main effects are much stronger, the interaction revealed statistical significance and is considered first.

As the univariate F , eta-square, and discriminant coefficients in Table 2 indicate, the only source of the interaction is the confidence ratings for partner stunts. An examination of those means reveals that for the cheerleading sample, males ($M = 5.0$) were slightly more confident than were the females ($M = 4.8$), but for the noncheerleading sample, females ($M = 2.4$) were more confident than were the males ($M = 1.8$). Predictably, the overall sample difference is clear, with both female and male cheerleaders reporting higher confidence than the male and female noncheerleaders. Given that the only significant univariate interaction had a relatively small eta-square of .018, we now turn to the sample and gender main effects.

Clearly, the sample main effect, with an effect size of .503, indicates a strong difference between the confidence levels of cheerleaders and noncheerleaders. However, these findings are not particularly interesting for this study. As would be expected, cheerleaders were more confident at cheerleading and its various subtasks than were noncheerleaders (see Table 3).

All univariate F values were statistically significant, and all eta-square values were higher than the eta-square of the one statistically significant univariate interaction. The sample difference was relatively balanced and consistent, but univariate F , eta-square, and discriminant coefficients suggest confidence ratings for overall cheerleading, cheers and motions, partner stunts, and jumps showed somewhat stronger sample differences. In contrast, the sample differences for overall athletic ability was weaker, although cheerleaders were more confident even on this rating.

As mentioned previously, gender differences were more important for the present study. The multivariate effect size of .343 suggests a notable difference. The univariate F , eta-square, and standardized discriminant coefficients in Table 4

Table 3 Sample Main Effect for Confidence Ratings

Tasks	Cheerleaders	Noncheerleaders	Univariate F	Eta-square	Standardized disc. coeff.
Cheerleading	5.2	2.6	355.87*	.412	.199
Cheers & motions	5.4	3.0	295.03*	.367	.432
Partner stunts	4.9	2.2	363.40*	.417	.559
Jumps	4.7	2.5	192.33*	.275	.265
Tumbling	3.8	2.8	21.25*	.040	-.242
Dance	4.3	3.3	43.70*	.079	-.174
Athletic ability	5.7	4.8	46.37	.084	-.082

* $p < .001$.

Table 4 Gender Main Effect for Confidence Ratings

Tasks	Females	Males	Univariate <i>F</i>	Eta-square	Standardized disc. coeff.
Cheerleading	4.7	4.5	18.84*	.036	-.066
Cheers & motions	5.2	4.4	59.37*	.105	-.254
Partner stunts	4.2	4.4	2.05	.004	.062
Jumps	4.4	3.9	20.36*	.039	-.072
Tumbling	3.8	3.3	3.05	.006	-.072
Dance	5.0	2.7	143.45*	.220	-.768
Athletic ability	5.2	5.9	36.62*	.067	.737

* $p < .001$.

indicate that the gender differences were not quite as balanced as the sample differences.

Gender differences in cheers and motion, dance, and athletic ability should be noted. Dance showed the strongest gender difference, with females more confident than males on dance. Females were also more confident than males on cheers and motions, with the next largest univariate F and eta-square values, as well as on all other confidence ratings except for athletic ability. Notably, athletic ability was the only variable with a reversed gender difference, as males reported more confidence than females did. Although the univariate F was not significant, and the eta-square and discriminant coefficient was relatively small for the partner stunts, it should be noted that this was the rating that exhibited the interaction. Male cheerleaders were more confident than female cheerleaders were, but the gender difference was reversed for the noncheerleaders.

Gender-Appropriateness Ratings

Two different gender-appropriateness ratings were analyzed. First, subjects' ratings of cheerleading and its five subtasks were analyzed. Second, subjects' ratings of how they believed the typical college student would rate the same items were analyzed. For the subjects' own ratings of gender appropriateness, a Gender x Sample MANOVA yielded main effects for sample, Wilks's lambda = .795, $F(6, 696) = 21.36$, $p < .001$, $ES = .205$; gender, Wilks's lambda = .954, $F(6, 496) = 4.02$, $p < .001$, $ES = .046$; and the interaction, Wilks's lambda = .967, $F(6, 496) = 2.80$, $p < .02$, $ES = .033$. As with the confidence ratings, the interaction was significant but was the weakest effect, and neither the gender effect nor the sample effect, the strongest in this analysis, are as strong as the confidence effects.

Univariate $F(1, 501) = 8.05$, $p < .01$, eta-square (.016), and standardized discriminant function coefficient (.75) revealed that the interaction was evident only for gender ratings of partner stunts. No other univariate F tests revealed significance; all other eta-squares were less than .01; and no other discriminant coefficients were as high. Overall, both female and male cheerleaders rated partner stunts as more masculine than did the male and female noncheerleaders, but the sample difference was stronger for males. Male cheerleaders rated partner stunts as more masculine ($M = 5.1$) than did male noncheerleaders ($M = 4.3$). Female cheerleaders rated partner stunts slightly more masculine ($M = 4.6$) than did female noncheerleaders ($M = 4.4$), but this difference was minimal. Looking at this interaction in terms of gender, for the cheerleaders, male cheerleaders rated partner stunts more masculine than did female cheerleaders, but for non-cheerleaders, females rated partner stunts slightly more masculine than did the males.

As with confidence ratings, the sample difference was the strongest multivariate effect, and subsequent univariate analyses produced significant sample differences for all tasks except dance. The univariate F , eta-square, and standardized discriminant function coefficients suggest that cheerleading and cheers and motions contributed most to the multivariate sample difference. As shown in Table 5, noncheerleaders rated cheerleading and all subtasks except dance more toward the feminine end of the continuum than did

cheerleaders. The strongest difference was for overall cheerleading, which noncheerleaders rated as more feminine ($M = 3.3$) and the cheerleaders rated as gender-neutral ($M = 4.1$). Notably, samples did not differ on dance ratings, as both samples rated dance as very feminine.

MANOVA also revealed a significant main effect for gender. As can be seen in Table 6, univariate gender differences were significant only for cheers and motions, which had the largest eta-square and discriminant function coefficient, and for dance, with the females rating both tasks as less feminine and closer to gender neutral than did males. Clearly, the sample difference was the strongest and most consistent finding for the gender-appropriateness ratings.

MANOVA on the typical college student ratings revealed only the sample main effect, Wilks's lambda = .793, $F(6, 497) = 21.60, p < .001, ES = .207$, was significant. The gender main effects, Wilks's lambda = .992, $F(6, 497) = .699, p = .651, ES = .008$, and the interaction, Wilks's lambda = .981, $F(6, 497) = 1.64, p = .135, ES = .019$, were nonsignificant.

Table 5 Sample Main Effect for Gender-Appropriateness Ratings

Tasks	Cheerleaders	Noncheerleaders	Univariate <i>F</i>	Eta-square	Standardized disc. coeff.
Cheerleading	4.1	3.3	92.45**	.156	-.696
Cheers & motions	3.7	3.1	47.27**	.086	-.482
Partner stunts	4.8	4.4	25.01**	.048	-.189
Jumps	3.5	3.2	4.75*	.009	.108
Tumbling	4.1	3.7	20.60**	.039	-.109
Dance	2.5	2.7	0.30	.001	.303

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

Table 6 Gender Main Effect for Gender-Appropriateness Ratings

Tasks	Females	Males	Univariate <i>F</i>	Eta-square	Standardized disc. coeff.
Cheerleading	3.9	3.9	1.81	.004	.189
Cheers & motions	3.7	3.3	17.13**	.033	.807
Partner stunts	4.6	5.0	3.47	.007	-.430
Jumps	3.5	3.3	1.21	.002	-.051
Tumbling	4.0	4.0	0.67	.001	-.236
Dance	2.6	2.4	4.83*	.010	.184

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

Univariate sample effects (see Table 7) were significant for all tasks except cheers and motions, with cheerleaders predicting that typical college students would rate partner stunts, tumbling, and cheerleading as more masculine, but jumps and dance as more feminine. Univariate F , eta-square, and standardized discriminant function coefficients all indicate that partner stunts showed the strongest sample difference.

Discussion

The major purpose of this study was to examine self-confidence within cheerleading while also examining the gender stereotypes associated with the sport. Results confirmed that cheerleading was gender-typed as feminine but, as expected, was viewed as more gender-neutral by cheerleading participants. Also,

Table 7 Sample Main Effect for Typical College Student Ratings

Tasks	Cheerleaders	Noncheerleaders	Univariate <i>F</i>	Eta-square	Standardized disc. coeff.
Cheerleading	2.9	2.7	4.84*	.010	-.215
Cheers & motions	2.7	2.7	0.01	.000	-.163
Partner stunts	5.2	4.1	79.63***	.137	-.697
Jumps	2.5	3.0	19.88***	.038	.401
Tumbling	3.8	3.5	8.35**	.016	-.225
Dance	1.7	2.3	25.78***	.049	.452

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

as hypothesized, females were more confident in their ability at this feminine- typed activity than males were. The noncheerleader ratings are not surprising, considering that cheerleading has been rated the most feminine sport in previous studies (Csizma et al., 1988; Matteo, 1984; Metheny, 1965).

Cheerleaders in this study were aware of that stereotype (they even predicted that college students would rate it more feminine than the noncheerleaders actually did), yet they rated their sport as gender neutral or appropriate for both sexes. Because cheerleaders compete with and against members of both sexes, to view their sport as less appropriate for one sex would seriously affect their ability to successfully interact and be productive in their collective efforts. The current results indicate that cheerleaders believe that their sport is appropriate for both sexes, regardless of how it is viewed by others.

These findings raise interesting questions: Who decides gender typing of a particular sport? If those involved with cheerleading do not view their sport as feminine, is it a feminine-typed task? Previous studies indicate that college undergraduates view the sport as extremely feminine, but should we use the opinion of participants or outsiders? These questions need to be addressed, as well as having subjects rate the task rather than simply relying on previous studies.

When considering the tasks within cheerleading, both samples rated partner stunts as the most masculine of the tasks, perhaps because of the physical demands required in lifting and tossing another human being in the air. Dance was rated the most feminine task and clearly stood out from the other tasks. Tumbling was rated the second most masculine task. This was surprising in that tumbling is similar to gymnastics, which previous studies have found to be rated close to cheerleading on the feminine end of the continuum (Csizma et al., 1988; Matteo, 1984).

It was hypothesized that cheerleaders would predict that typical college students would rate tasks as more feminine than the cheerleaders themselves would. Findings confirmed that cheerleaders rated cheerleading, cheers and motions, jumps, and tumbling closer to gender neutral than did the noncheerleaders and rated partner stunts more masculine. In contrast, dance was rated extremely feminine by both samples.

Cheerleaders indicated that the typical college student would rate everything except partner stunts toward the feminine extreme. In fact, the noncheerleaders' ratings of partner stunts had the highest means (closer to masculine end), but were still more feminine than that of the cheerleaders. Furthermore, cheerleaders indicated that a typical college student would rate dance as the most feminine task. Although the noncheerleading subjects did rate dance as the most feminine, their ratings were not as extremely feminine as the cheerleaders had predicted. In general, however, the cheerleaders were relatively accurate in predicting the responses by the noncheerleading sample.

Findings suggest that females possess more confidence on all of the tasks within cheerleading except partner stunts and tumbling, the tasks being the most masculine. The largest gender difference in confidence was at dance, and dance was also rated as the most feminine task.

These findings suggest that when assessing confidence in sports, it is important to consider separate tasks in the sport rather than simply asking one global confidence question. Even in cheerleading, a sport viewed as entirely feminine by college students and in which females possess higher confidence at virtually every aspect, there is still one task (partner stunts) within the sport on which males possess a high level of confidence. This may be the case in other sports and activities. Clearly, physical educators working with young children, as well as many other practitioners, could benefit from such a task analysis.

As predicted, females were more confident in their abilities as cheerleaders than were males. This result is only rarely found in the literature on gender and self-confidence. Many authors (Corbin & Nix, 1979; Eccles et al., 1983; Lenney, 1977; Petruzzello & Corbin, 1988) have suggested that the nature of the task is important in determining self-confidence. However, very little empirical evidence supports this contention. In fact, the few studies showing females to possess more self-confidence than males have often been dismissed as the exception to the rule.

In this study, however, such gender differences were hypothesized and confirmed. Because of the unique socialization processes involved with cheerleading, females begin at an earlier age than males do and thus have more experience and opportunity to develop skills and confidence in their ability. Females in this study began cheerleading at a much earlier age (12 years) than did males (19 years), and this may account for some differences. However, in this study, contrary to previous findings, cheerleading was not rated as extremely feminine, and females still reported more confidence than males did. Such findings are even rarer in the literature on gender differences.

Findings also suggest that males possess greater confidence than females on overall athletic ability. Although many male subjects were not very confident with their cheerleading ability, most were extremely confident in their overall athletic ability. Although males may get a later start at cheerleading than females do, they may participate in other sports and gain confidence in their overall athletic ability. The responses on this more general statement are more consistent with findings in other studies on gender differences in self-confidence.

By considering gender and confidence with a feminine sport task, the current study fills a gap in the literature. Of course, many questions remain unanswered. For example, can the findings be extended to other sports, including sports not on the extreme end of the gender-appropriateness continuum? What factors besides gender appropriateness play a role in determining self-confidence in sport? Future studies might consider gender appropriateness and confidence along with other variables, such as motivational orientation or perceived task value, that influence decisions to participate and confidence at various sports and sport tasks.

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